

Interview Transcript

Interview Date: 11/09/2016

Interviewee: Sister Margaret Ellen McGraw

Interviewer: Shannon Green, Director, CSJ Institute, Mount Saint Mary's University; Kelby Thwaits, Instructor, Film and Television, Mount Saint Mary's University; Mary Trunk, Instructor, Film and Television, Mount Saint Mary's University; Laura Townsend, Production Coordinator, CSJ Institute.

Location: Carondelet Center, Los Angeles, California.

Transcription Date: 03/22/2017

Transcribed By: Nancy Steinmann

[00:00:00.00] [Director's comments].

[00:01:05.25] INTERVIEWER: If you could tell us your full name and your age?

[00:01:10.11] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Margaret Ellen--Sister Margaret Ellen McGraw. My age is eighty-seven. I'm one of the old girls. [laughs].

[00:01:20.02] INTERVIEWER: And we can call you Sister Maggie?

[00:01:23.02] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yeah. Sure.

[00:01:25.14] INTERVIEWER: I heard that's what you go by.

[00:01:26.01] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Right, it is.

[00:01:28.11] INTERVIEWER: So Sister Maggie, could you tell us where you were born and a little bit about your childhood?

[00:01:32.29] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: I was born in Detroit, Michigan, and I lived there until I was about eighteen. What was the other part of the--.

[00:01:42.27] INTERVIEWER: How about your family, parents, siblings?

[00:01:45.02] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Okay. I had four brothers and two sisters. There were two marriages, so three of us with the first and then the other four after that. I went to Holy Redeemer School of Redemptor's Parish, and one of the parishioners was just made a cardinal--Father "Joe" Tobin [Cardinal Joseph William Tobin C.Ss.R.] is now a cardinal. Anyway, Detroit at that time was tied up with automobiles, you know, great automobile place. I went through twelve years of school at Holy Redeemer's School in Detroit. And then I graduated and I worked for about a year, and I came out here to visit an aunt and stayed--[laughs]. And one Sunday afternoon some friends took me for a ride up here, and I met Sister [Mary] Teresa Connolly. I had never met anybody, you know, from the St. Joseph Sisters. And the story goes on from there. So that was in 1953.

[00:02:57.19] INTERVIEWER: How did your parents feel about you coming to California to stay?

[00:03:01.26] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well, I didn't know I was going to stay when I came. Who wants to stay in Detroit after you've seen California--"after you've seen Par-ee", you know? [laughs]. That--it was like that. And they were fine. They were fine with it. Because I was the oldest of the first group--no, I was the youngest of the first group and the youngest of the second. So they were okay.

[00:03:27.15] INTERVIEWER: Were you a very religious family?

[00:03:29.27] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Not everybody. [laughs]. Not everybody. But we were, you know, the Irish Catholics who go to wakes and weddings and to Sunday Mass--and that was it.

[00:03:40.12] INTERVIEWER: Did you feel--did you have Sisters in your grade school?

[00:03:45.02] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yes. The Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters from Monroe, Michigan.

[00:03:48.15] INTERVIEWER: Did you have any sense that you wanted to be a Sister when you were younger?

[00:03:53.02] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Not when I was younger. I mainly thought, "Get somebody else." [laughs]. But after I graduated from high school and when I came to the Mount, the Sisters were very different. They--more down to earth, more fun, more real people. The Sisters I had when I was in elementary school--I think they have to be different anyway to be dealing with a lot of kids. So, yeah. So I felt it. And then there were people that encouraged me. So when I came to the Mount I was in the Nursing program. And then after three years I think--it was in 1953-54 I entered.

[00:04:45.17] INTERVIEWER: Who were some of the people that encouraged you?

[00:04:49.09] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well Sister [Mary] Teresa Connolly was one of them. And I can't remember some of the other names. But there were people before when I was even in high school. Someone said, "Oh you're going to be a Sister someday." "Not me!" [laughs].

[00:05:05.01] INTERVIEWER: What was it about the Sisters of St. Joseph? You said just a little bit, but what about them attracted you?

[00:05:11.23] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: They were just down-to-earth, real people, you know. And we had fun. And then they stayed with us--when I went to the Nursing program we lived in different places. So I was at St. Vincent's Hospital for a while with the Daughters of Charity, and then at Queen of Angels which was then Franciscan Sisters. I wasn't attracted to either of them. But then after three years I entered--I think--yeah it was about like that.

[00:05:48.05] INTERVIEWER: And you were finished with school or not quite finished?

[00:05:51.26] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: No. I still had my junior year to finish. At the end of my junior year I entered.

[00:05:58.01] INTERVIEWER: How did your family feel about you entering religious life?

[00:06:02.24] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Oh they thought it was great. Yeah. But I didn't get to see them that much after. To travel back to Detroit--that was too much.

[00:06:11.26] INTERVIEWER: Were they able to come for your reception?

[00:06:14.19] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: No. Because four of them were younger than me--much younger. So that would be expensive. Yeah.

[00:06:27.16] INTERVIEWER: What do you remember about entering and your reception?

[00:06:31.20] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: I thought--I felt at home right away. It was great people--I think there were sixty of us that entered. That was during the fifties, you know--a lot of people came. And Sister [Mary] Rebecca [Doan (1910- 1999)]--was, you know the Nursing. And then there was Sister John Bernard [Marion Hurley]. And Sister Mary Arthur [Meyer?]. They were really--they lived with us, I mean they were really involved with us.

[00:07:04.17] INTERVIEWER: And you stayed in Nursing for some time?

[00:07:08.12] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: I did, yes.

[00:07:09.06] INTERVIEWER: What kind of Nursing were you doing?

[00:07:10.29] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well I started off with Medical/Surgical Nursing. And then I was at Daniel Freeman Hospital, and then I got changed to St. Louis--no, not St. Louis--[laughs]--to St. Joseph's Hospital in Lewiston, Idaho. Lewiston, Idaho was a place I'd never heard of before. And I was put in charge of Pediatrics. So from Med/Surg with adults to Pediatrics. And most of our patients were little Nez Perce Indians. So a whole different culture. But that was good--it was fun.

[00:07:55.04] INTERVIEWER: What was it like at Daniel Freeman in the late fifties early sixties? What was Inglewood like?

[00:07:59.01] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: It was very busy. The hospital was very busy--you know, sometimes extremely busy. Very busy emergency room, you know, a lot of new admissions and everything. So I met a lot of people in those years. Important people, like [Gilbert] "Gil" [Ray] Hodges [(1924-1972)] of the Dodgers, and other Dodgers--yeah. And other important people.

[00:08:26.05] INTERVIEWER: What did you hope for as a Sister nurse? What did you want to achieve, or what were your hopes and expectations?

[00:08:33.20] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Just to get all my papers in--all my assignments done and--we rotated, you know, through different services.

[00:08:45.08] INTERVIEWER: My mother's a nurse, and she's a very practical woman, very pragmatic. I think I'm wondering was there any idealism that you had as you entered and finished your studies and worked as a Sister and a nurse? Dreams, vision?

[00:09:02.09] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: What happened in those days--if you did a good job, then they'd promote you. That didn't happen with other people. So it was always a challenge there to get into something new.

[00:09:15.04] INTERVIEWER: Did that happen to you?

[00:09:18.13] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yeah. So I went all the way from being just a staff nurse and ended up being the Director of Nursing at Daniel Freeman. So I had all those levels in between.

[00:09:32.04] INTERVIEWER: You moved around a bit in the sixties from Lewiston and then to Tucson. What was it like for you to go from--to be missioned from place to place?

[00:09:42.18] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: It was good. Yeah. I went to Tucson, and that was a great experience. Hospital there had been there for a long, long time. It was very well known. We were out in the desert so there was a lot of places to go outside. Yeah, that was a good place. And the Sisters there were really, really--I looked up to them.

[00:10:07.04] INTERVIEWER: What was it about them?

[00:10:09.23] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: They--again--you could be--at home with them. Yeah. They were very real. There were a few I didn't get along with, you know. [laughs]. But mostly, yeah.

[00:10:25.03] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: You mentioned the Nez Perce community. What impact did it have on you? Did you have, you know, preconceived notions about Native Americans or did you know anything about--

[00:10:38.25] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: I didn't know anything about them, so I was learning all the time. And that's the thing about nursing--you're learning all the time, and you're teaching all the time. So I learned from them.

[00:10:50.22] INTERVIEWER: What did you learn from them?

[00:10:53.06] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: About some of their customs and some of their ways,

you know. Yeah.

[00:11:03.25] INTERVIEWER: Vatican II was starting to happen at this time. Because you entered a little older than some of your--

[00:11:10.21] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yes. I was twenty-three when I entered.

[00:11:13.09] INTERVIEWER: So what was it like as a young Sister and Vatican II's happening [unintelligible]?

[00:11:18.14] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: That was exciting.

[00:11:19.26] INTERVIEWER: What was exciting about it?

[00:11:21.15] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well, you know changes coming, and a lot of the things we were doing--we let go of those and took on new visions, new--yeah.

[00:11:33.09] INTERVIEWER: So how did you feel about those changes like the habit or?

[00:11:36.24] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: You know, I was actually relieved when we could take the habit off, because in the hospital anything that's below your waist--is on the floor--can get contaminated. So you had to be aware of a lot of stuff. And the rosary beads--you know they were beautiful--they hung on the side--but that was not good in taking care of patients--like getting caught on the rails and everything.

[00:12:02.26] INTERVIEWER: Was--did you experience different feelings that people had about those changes at that time in the community?

[00:12:10.00] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Oh yeah. In the community--they didn't like the changes. They would--"Why are you going to give up--?" There are a couple of people still running around in the habit--you've probably seen them. They'll never give it up. So. Yeah.

[00:12:22.29] INTERVIEWER: But it was fine for you.

[00:12:25.03] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Oh it was, yeah. You know, when everybody else--we were supposed to be like everybody else. So we were more like--and then the nurses related to us differently--the regular nurses.

[00:12:41.01] INTERVIEWER: How did they respond when they first saw you out of the habit?

[00:12:46.05] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Good. And the doctors especially. A bunch of them--I looked up one day and there were about five of them standing around me. You know when I first got into regular clothing. "Oh, there's a real person there". [all laugh].

[00:13:01.28] INTERVIEWER: What color was your hair? [laughs].

[00:13:04.04] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: My hair was brown. Yeah.

[00:13:07.14] INTERVIEWER: That seems to be a big mystery.

[00:13:08.21] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Right. Oh yeah. "Oh she's got legs!" [laughs].

[00:13:15.07] INTERVIEWER: What about some of the other changes? You said it was exciting. What else from the church experience was exciting for you?

[00:13:22.26] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well, the prayers. We had--you know, were all in Latin. And we got changed from that back into English. And that was very good, because we knew what we were talking about. [laughs]. Yeah.

[00:13:37.12] INTERVIEWER: What was it like to be back at Daniel Freeman--this looks like shortly after the riots [Watts Riots 1965]? What was it like there in that neighborhood at that time?

[00:13:48.17] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well we were pretty safe, because you're in a convent and--yeah, we were pretty safe. I was never afraid there. And I lived in the Howland Mansion [Daniel Freeman Mansion, Inglewood, California]. It was a big home there. One of the guys that--I think it was Daniel Freeman--was a big name in the early days. He was gone when I--but he built the whole thing up so-. And there were changes professionally in the Nursing program, you know.

[00:14:24.25] INTERVIEWER: So for you personally? Yeah? What did you--what changes did you--?

[00:14:31.24] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well like going from one specialty to another. Having to learn all about that.

[00:14:36.29] INTERVIEWER: What were some of the different specialties you had? You said Med/Surg--

[00:14:40.10] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yeah. And then--well when I went to Lewiston it was Pediatrics. And then--let's see where did I go after Lewiston--?

[00:14:50.29] INTERVIEWER: Tucson.

[00:14:51.28] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Tucson, yeah. And that was a whole new experience too, with the Nez Perce Indians and getting to know them.

[00:15:02.08] INTERVIEWER: So did you--you went back to school at UCLA?

[00:15:06.26] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: I did.

[00:15:07.08] INTERVIEWER: What did you study?

[00:15:08.16] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: I studied Nursing. [laughs]. Got a Masters in Nursing.

[00:15:11.05] INTERVIEWER: And what did your studies focus on?

[00:15:15.05] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Community Mental Health. So I had--part of my training was at VA [Veteran's Administration] Hospital. And it was kind of safe to be in the habit, because you're there--all these guys, you know. [laughs]. And that was good.

[00:15:32.17] INTERVIEWER: Did you stay in psychiatric--mental health nursing?

[00:15:37.02] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: No. It's always included in a lot of the things you're doing, you know. But no I was mostly in the medical.

[00:15:48.16] INTERVIEWER: Around that time too the community is going through renewal, and learning more about the roots, researching the roots. How did that impact you or your identity as a Sister of St. Joseph?

[00:16:02.01] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: It was exciting. It was fun. And learning a lot--.

[00:16:06.09] INTERVIEWER: Was there any piece of the history that inspires you particularly?

[00:16:11.01] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: I have to think.

[00:16:17.06] INTERVIEWER: Le Puy, or Mother St. John [Fontbonne] or the Trek--?

[00:16:21.19] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well the Trek [of the Seven Sisters [1870]]. Because we

always participated in that.

[00:16:25.04] INTERVIEWER: Oh you've been on the--you participated in the Trek?

[00:16:27.07] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: No I didn't participate in the Trek, but we re-enacted it in Tucson as part of the--there was a week-long celebration or something. So we followed the Trek of the Seven Sisters. Yeah.

[00:16:43.03] INTERVIEWER: Is there any moment from the Trek that stands out for you, that you re-enacted?

[00:16:46.28] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well we had a lot of horses and donkeys and all that. Yeah.

[00:16:53.10] INTERVIEWER: What did that say to you about the women of that time, those seven?

[00:16:59.01] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well they were hardy women. Yeah. And out on the reservation--San Xavier Mission [Mission San Xavier del Bac on Tohono O'odham San Xavier Indian Reservation, Arizona]. That's where they were. And they had a hard life. And then we had a whole group of Sisters that were part of another community from Tipton, place in St. Louis [Missouri]. And they amalgamated with us. So there were still a few of those--you know, they were very elderly by the time we got there. But they were kind of rough and ready people--[laughs]--because they grew up there in that Wild West--they would take on anything.

[00:17:44.23] INTERVIEWER: Do you see that spirit alive today?

[00:17:49.14] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Oh yes.

[00:17:49.27] INTERVIEWER: In what ways?

[00:17:51.16] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well, look where we are. We're all over the place. And some people are really brave--they've gone into things that--like law. Sister Annette [??], you know.

[00:18:04.21] INTERVIEWER: Tell us a little bit about her--what you know of her work, so we understand that.

[00:18:12.08] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well, she got her law degree. And she could handle a lot of stuff. And then we had Sister Judy [Lovchik (-1981)] and Sister Clare [Dunn (-1981), Arizona State Representative (D) 1974-1981]. They were the ones that were killed in an accident. But they were very active. And they were a lot of fun because we could talk about politics--we could talk about everything, you know.

[00:18:31.14] INTERVIEWER: So you were with them in Tucson?

[00:18:33.09] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yes.

[00:18:34.07] INTERVIEWER: So would you--we just had our election [2016 Presidential Election]--would you just tell--for the camera, what Sister Judy and Sister Clare did?

[00:18:41.12] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well, Judy was the speechwriter for Clare. Clare was the one that ran for office, and she was very astute in politics and the political scene and all of that. So we got involved in that and we made a lot of phone calls and--were going around neighborhoods knocking on doors and promoting them. So it was very tough when they were both killed on the same day. It was very sad.

[00:19:12.07] INTERVIEWER: They seem to have carried that spirit--

[00:19:15.00] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: They did. Oh, they did. Big time.

[00:19:17.20] INTERVIEWER: What did they hope to achieve?

[00:19:20.13] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well, the--you know--what people needed--jobs and--and then getting more education, you know. So we opened a lot of schools during that time. But I didn't--was not involved in the schools. So--but they--you know, were ready to take on anything.

[00:19:50.09] INTERVIEWER: And what about the charism? You know we talk about unity and reconciliation, unifying love, or the dear neighbor--what did those kinds of parts of the spirit really speak to you?

[00:20:03.10] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well you know what really spoke to me--one year on retreat this Jesuit priest said, "You should go someplace where you don't know anything about it"--the people or the--you know, totally new experience--you don't know the language and all this. And I thought, that's kind of exciting. And so when the--this was part of the--I guess part of the Vietnam War [1955-1975]--I went to Thailand as a nurse, you know. And so--I had to learn a lot. But you learn from the people--you don't go there to teach them--you go to learn. And we were told not to do any of the hands-on things except to be teaching them. So if we got thrown out of there, they would have those skills. So that was part of it too.

[00:20:58.17] INTERVIEWER: You were mostly working in a refugee camp?

[00:21:01.05] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yeah.

[00:21:01.25] INTERVIEWER: What was the--what do you remember about the refugee camp?

[00:21:05.06] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: A lot of people. And they lived in bamboo--they built--bamboo is a very good building material--it's very strong. So they build houses and you know I had like a little office, you know. So they would come to me for treatment or for diagnosing. So I saw a lot of malaria--you could feel the heat coming off of them as they came in, you know. And then with the kids a lot of communicable diseases, you know. And yeah--that was--.

[00:21:43.01] INTERVIEWER: And was there another Sister with you?

[00:21:45.16] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yeah, Sister [Theresa Cavalli??]. We went there together. And she was in a different camp than I was. I thought it would be great we were together but--we were in different places, yeah.

[00:21:57.20] INTERVIEWER: Was it overwhelming, or was it--

[00:22:00.08] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well you knew you couldn't do everything, you know, so you could be overwhelmed. But you just did as much as you could.

[00:22:08.07] INTERVIEWER: So you followed this Jesuit's advice?

[00:22:11.12] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yes.

[00:22:12.29] INTERVIEWER: And how do you think that impacted you over the long term?

[00:22:17.08] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Made me ready to experience something new--not be afraid, you know. [laughs]. And there were times I was really afraid, you know. Like we'd go someplace at night, and things would happen, and--.

[00:22:35.06] INTERVIEWER: It sounds like a--quite a--a very different--it must have been very transforming kind of experience.

[00:22:44.06] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: I think it was, yeah.

[00:22:48.15] INTERVIEWER: You've spent some time as a campus minister--

[00:22:51.18] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: I did.

[00:22:52.11] INTERVIEWER: --both at the Mount--

[00:22:53.28] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: --and UCLA and University of Arizona--

[00:22:56.00] INTERVIEWER: So that is a departure from Nursing as well. So tell us about--I'm an old--I was a campus minister myself, and--

[00:23:03.15] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Oh were you?

[00:23:03.21] INTERVIEWER: --and of course I work at the Mount, so what was it like for you to work with college students in that way?

[00:23:07.13] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: I enjoyed it. I really enjoyed it, and I didn't have to give them tests or stuff like that, you know. [laughs]. Yeah, it was fun.

[00:23:17.17] INTERVIEWER: What were the students like then?

[00:23:19.25] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well what were they like? Hm. Energetic, and enjoying new things, and very studious--much more studious than I ever was. [laughs].

[00:23:38.15] INTERVIEWER: You've done so many different things. Parish life as well.

[00:23:44.23] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Uh-hm. I was in the--in San Jose--I was in a parish there. And the pastor was very into social action, you know. And he was fluent in Spanish, although he was Irish. [laughs]. And so we did a lot of stuff with people. Like one time we had a lot of floods go on, and people lost everything, you know. And when you see the damage water can do--so we got to experience that.

[00:24:20.26] INTERVIEWER: Was there ever a particular social justice issue in these years that you became passionate about or that--?

[00:24:29.19] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: I have to think about it.

[00:24:33.28] INTERVIEWER: That's all right. You were exposed to so many different kinds of populations.

[00:24:38.17] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yeah. Like when the farm workers was going on [1965-1970] and we'd be marching and--

[00:24:47.09] INTERVIEWER: You participated in the marches?

[00:24:49.19] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yeah. Uh-hm. And Cesar Chavez [1927-1993]. And yeah.

[00:24:59.25] INTERVIEWER: So you were an activist on the side--[laughs]--or--while you were--

[00:25:04.07] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well, sometimes involved in the action part of it, yeah.

[00:25:09.14] INTERVIEWER: And then what brought you to Washington, D. C.?

[00:25:14.18] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Oh well, let's see. Then I was--Washington, D. C.--I have to go back in my head--.

[00:25:24.12] [Director's comments].

[00:25:44.24] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: When I got into parish ministry, and then I was encouraging the people to get involved in stuff, you know, politically and yeah. So that was exciting.

[00:25:58.26] INTERVIEWER: Who were some of the other figures that maybe influenced you at that time? You mentioned Cesar Chavez--

[00:26:09.09] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Oh and Judy and Clare, you know, being with them. And some of the other people. Yeah. And then, I'm trying to think of that transition from parish to--oh, to get to Washington, D. C. Yeah.

[00:26:28.08] [Director's comments]

[00:26:43.03] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Oh yeah, I was working with another Sister there, in Washington. She was already in Washington. And she was working at the Seminary, at Catholic University--the Theological College where the guys came to--. And I think--oh yeah, I have to go back a little bit. I went to USF--University of San Francisco, and she was there in the same program I was in--which was Applied Spirituality. So I got a masters in that.

[00:27:20.29] INTERVIEWER: Why did you go for a Spirituality degree?

[00:27:24.07] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Because I was--you know, that was part of the campus ministry idea, so you were--. Because we didn't do a lot of studying in Theology, you know, in Nursing, and you're keeping up with all that, you know.

[00:27:37.18] INTERVIEWER: But you got drawn into--

[00:27:40.06] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yeah, the Spirituality--uh-hm.

[00:27:44.01] INTERVIEWER: Is there any part of Theology or Spirituality that's--that you've really gravitated towards? You know, scripture or retreat work or--?

[00:27:56.17] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: All of that's in it. Yeah. I did a lot of retreats. And taking courses. And you know, going to short-term things. Yeah, like weeks of something or other.

[00:28:17.24] INTERVIEWER: Kind of renewal kinds of--

[00:28:20.20] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yeah.

[00:28:22.19] INTERVIEWER: So I'm sorry I made you go back but--so you had a Sister friend from USF?

[00:28:28.02] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yes.

[00:28:28.22] INTERVIEWER: And who was at Catholic U?

[00:28:30.28] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Um-hm. And she was from another community. And her name was Lucy. And Lucy--Lucy Malarkey--[laughs]--so they said "McGraw and Malarkey, what a pair!". And yeah. So we were mostly--what would they--we had a name--.

[00:28:53.11] INTERVIEWER: This says you were "a counseling associate"?

[00:28:57.21] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yeah. Well it was counseling, but--we were advisors. We weren't really spiritual directors, we were advisors. Because you know you had the men and the women. So, yeah.

[00:29:11.25] INTERVIEWER: What was that experience like?

[00:29:14.04] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: That again was fun. And you got to know the whole gamut of the male population. Yeah.

[00:29:24.28] INTERVIEWER: Did you experience any clericalism while you--?

[00:29:27.07] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Of course. Yeah. But these guys were good. They were well educated. They were Sulpicians, and they were very well educated guys. And we had good camaraderie, you know. And we lived right in the building with them, so.

[00:29:50.20] INTERVIEWER: Oh, you worked for some time at--oh you were in leadership?

[00:29:55.27] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Right. [all laugh]. Because when I was in Washington, I was only going to stay there a little while, you know. Kind of an interim thing. But it was several months. And then I was called on to be a Regional Superior. And we had a different governmental structure then. So I did that.

[00:30:19.10] INTERVIEWER: Did you like being in leadership?

[00:30:21.24] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yeah, it was good. In the nursing profession you have so many experiences in so many things, you know.

[00:30:32.27] INTERVIEWER: You felt prepared?

[00:30:35.01] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: I did, yeah. And then I had four brothers of my own, so I was used to guys. [all laugh].

[00:30:44.03] INTERVIEWER: That could prepare you for a lot. You worked a little bit at St. Joseph's Center?

[00:30:53.24] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yes.

[00:30:54.08] INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Tell us about your experience there.

[00:30:57.03] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: That was good. I had a program called "The Next Step" for guys who were getting out of jail, or you know, whatever life they were in and they were ready to move on. And so you kind of guided them through that. That was good--I enjoyed that.

[00:31:14.12] INTERVIEWER: What kind of outcomes would you see for them? What would happen for them?

[00:31:18.17] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: That they would get jobs, you know--that they'd start their lives over again--taking the next step after they--[laughs]--went through their gang years and all that stuff. Yeah.

[00:31:30.15] INTERVIEWER: And the St. Joseph's Center does--

[00:31:31.21] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Oh they do a wonderful thing. Yeah. So there's a lot for them to do. So it was nice to see somebody making a new life for themselves.

[00:31:42.24] INTERVIEWER: That really goes back to the roots, in a way--of the Sisters of St. Joseph?

[00:31:48.27] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yeah.

[00:31:52.29] INTERVIEWER: You were at the Mount a couple of different times, it seems. What are your--how have you seen the Mount change over time?

[00:32:02.20] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Oh a lot.

[00:32:04.04] INTERVIEWER: Is there any little tidbits you could share with us?

[00:32:07.28] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well, the curriculum changed, and the--lot of building went on. And the turnover of people, you know, faculty. We've always had a great faculty. I remember Delahanty [Dr. James Delahanty (1905-2013)]. Did you get any names like that? He was in the--well politics, you know.

[00:32:45.24] INTERVIEWER: How did you like being at the Doheny campus?

[00:32:48.16] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: The Doheny campus?

[00:32:49.00] INTERVIEWER: Yes. More recently it says you were at Stimson House?

[00:32:51.26] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Oh I lived at Stimson House.

[00:32:53.17] INTERVIEWER: Yes. It says--did you work at the Doheny campus?

[00:32:57.23] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yeah, a little bit.

[00:32:58.23] INTERVIEWER: Yeah. How did you like that campus?

[00:33:01.11] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: I love that campus. That's really nice. And you're right in the middle of things in the city, you know.

[00:33:06.08] INTERVIEWER: Were you doing Nursing instruction, or?

[00:33:10.06] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: What was I doing when I was there? [laughs]. When you get old you don't even--go back--.

[00:33:24.16] INTERVIEWER: That's quite all right. How are you feeling about the future of religious life and the Sisters?

[00:33:29.20] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well you know it's so many changes, but that's the story of our lives, you know--we've changed. We changed from institutional kinds of things to more outside endeavors. So--.

[00:33:48.10] INTERVIEWER: So what of the charism are you hoping continues into the future?

[00:33:54.09] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: That we're open to taking on new things. That we're continuing learning and growing, and moving out to people.

[00:34:04.20] INTERVIEWER: Do you have--is there anything about the province or the congregation as a whole that you're very proud of? Of your community?

[00:34:13.14] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well, all of it. [laughs]. Like the Mount, I think, is a very big factor. Because we were all educated there. And--it's too bad that we, you know, couldn't keep Daniel Freeman, but you know, you could work hard to keep an institution going but other people can take over. We've trained them, and they can take over.

[00:34:46.11] INTERVIEWER: Have you experienced much of that training lay people or, you know, kind of handing things on to the next--?

[00:34:52.29] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Uh-hm. Yeah. Especially in Nursing, you know, because some people get really good at a technique or something like that, and they don't want anybody else to do it. I always wanted to teach them how, you know, so that they could continue on after I would be gone.

[00:35:14.10] INTERVIEWER: And what is--you've been here at Carondelet Center for a little while now?

[00:35:18.19] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Um-hm.

[00:35:18.25] INTERVIEWER: How has it been to be in retired life and--

[00:35:22.06] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: It's good. We get good care, good food, good housing, lots of opportunities.

[00:35:28.20] INTERVIEWER: Do you enjoy being with your Sisters?

[00:35:32.00] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: I do, yeah. And when I look at people I think, oh gosh, I never lived with her. But you meet a lot of new--people that are new to me.

[00:35:46.09] INTERVIEWER: What do you--how would you characterize what's brought you joy? It sounds like joy has been an important part--you've said having fun--what's brought you that joy over the years, if you could sum it up?

[00:36:04.10] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Part of it's being Irish, you know--you're always ready for a party. Yeah.

[00:36:10.03] INTERVIEWER: Has there been anything about being a Sister that you say, this is what's really made it all worth it?

[00:36:19.00] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Oh yeah. It's--and even though we're not in the habit anymore--but the way we relate to people. That's good.

[00:36:31.05] INTERVIEWER: Down-to-earth, real--

[00:36:33.00] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yes. Like I'm not real happy about our new President [Trump]. But--

[00:36:38.17] INTERVIEWER: No.

[00:36:42.05] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Anyway--

[00:36:42.25] INTERVIEWER: I think about that in terms of the charism, you know--unifying love.

[00:36:52.20] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well, we have to show it. And I think people will see it in us--probably see it more in me than I see myself.

[00:37:06.16] INTERVIEWER: And you probably see it then in others?

[00:37:09.27] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yeah. Oh yeah.

[00:37:13.27] INTERVIEWER: Are there any other Sisters you want to make sure we remember who can't speak for themselves anymore? Any names or--? You've mentioned a few. But is there anybody else?

[00:37:24.27] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Let's see.

[00:37:29.08] INTERVIEWER: And if not that's okay too.

[00:37:34.15] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yeah we had people that started things, you know. Like caregivers and--Next Step--St. Joseph Center--things that evolved from that. And I think we've taken a lot of risks. We're not afraid to try something new. Except now. I'm here on this hill and I look out and I go oh!

[00:38:02.14] INTERVIEWER: So if the students at the Mount may be that next kind of risk-taking, start something new group, do you have any words you would want the students to hear from the Sisters to

encourage them in their endeavors?

[00:38:20.02] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: "Be not afraid". You know, learn something new every day. And you get a good foundation here--a good education. And you can go and tackle the world after that.

[00:38:36.28] INTERVIEWER: Is that what the Mount did for you, or just being a Sister?

[00:38:40.13] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yeah.

[00:38:41.01] INTERVIEWER: Tackle the world.

[00:38:41.28] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yeah.

[00:38:47.21] INTERVIEWER: Was there anything as you reflected and prepared or thought about coming in today that you wanted to be sure to share with us that I haven't asked you about so far?

[00:38:58.13] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: I'd have to go back and look at my paper.

[00:39:04.00] INTERVIEWER: That's okay. Do you need--do you want to look at the questions, or did you make some notes or --??

[00:39:09.16] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well, I was just going to try to remember. [Director's comments.] When I was at the--I had a job at the cemetery.

[00:39:29.04] INTERVIEWER: Oh tell me about that.

[00:39:28.28] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: At Holy Cross Cemetery--yeah, Holy Cross. And then I was at several different ones too. And I forget the title of our job there--but we were dealing with families and--grieving families. And that was good. And so the training that I had as a nurse I was able to use that---in grief counseling and--

[00:40:02.02] INTERVIEWER: So you would encounter families that were burying loved ones? What got you to that work?

[00:40:09.05] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: They needed somebody. [laughs]. And I needed to have something that I was doing, and so I just got into it.

[00:40:22.24] INTERVIEWER: I think the--was there a superintendent of cemeteries, a lay man, who was at St. Mary's--who was on the board of St. Mary's Academy--do you know who I'm talking about?

[00:40:36.14] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: No.

[00:40:37.00] INTERVIEWER: Oh, that's okay.

[00:40:38.07] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Because that--

[00:40:40.26] INTERVIEWER: That might be LA or Inglewood--yeah.

[00:40:45.03] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: And you meet a lot of interesting people at that time. And a lot of interesting patients over the years. I remember one guy--[Francis James] Westbrook Pegler [(1894-1969)]--he was a big name in the news for a number of years--he was a columnist. And so he stirred up a lot of stuff in people. But he--then he was a patient on my floor.

[00:41:16.24] INTERVIEWER: It's like the great equalizer.

[00:41:20.12] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Um-hm. Yes. Yeah, so people that grieve or people that are sick--you deal with everything.

[00:41:31.13] INTERVIEWER: Is there anything else that you--?

[00:41:36.00] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: I'll probably think of stuff now--why didn't I tell them that?

[00:41:39.05] INTERVIEWER: That's okay. Kelby, do you have any questions?

[00:41:43.09] KELBY THWAITS: Yeah. Just two related questions. In your nursing ministry and career, what did you find to be particularly challenging or was there a particular time period or event or time that was particularly challenging, and what about it was challenging? And then on the flip side, what about your nursing career was most rewarding? So what were the two--?

[00:42:14.04] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: [laughs]. Challenging. People that can't communicate when you have to figure out what's wrong with them. Communicating with the doctors. Some of them were very easy to work with--very fine men--mostly men at that time. And--I learned a lot from them. And you get called on to do all kinds of things, you know, caring for people. And what was the other part of it?

[00:43:05.10] KELBY THWAITS: What did you find most rewarding or fulfilling about that?

[00:43:08.00] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Uh-hm. Helping people. Seeing people get better. Seeing people leave the hospital. We had one kid there--he was seventeen, and he had a terrible accident. And so he had broken bones but also he was comatose for a long time. But then I said to the nurses, "Now when you go to do something for him, talk to him. Tell him what you're going to do." And so they did--they started doing that. And one day this nurse came and she was all excited. And she said, "Fernando said he didn't want orange juice he wanted something else!", you know. And he started talking then. And his mother was a widow, and he was her only son. So then--you know we used to try to stimulate him. And one time I got a piece of his--[gestures at side]--you know, fat--belly fat or something, and twisted it, and he yelled. But it was a breakthrough for him. He started talking after that. And so then he came to visit me after. And I said, "Fernando, have you taken your mom out to dinner?" "Why would I do that?" I said, "She sat here with you when you were not able to do a thing for yourself, and she prayed so much for you", you know. So he kind of woke up to that. Because she was getting nothing out of him, you know, he was just--. But sometimes when that happens, when somebody that you think is not going to make it, you know--. And then when people reconcile and--you know, with people in their life, you know.

[00:44:53.16] INTERVIEWER: You see that a lot in healthcare, don't you?

[00:44:56.11] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yes. Life and death and family issues yeah.

[00:45:01.00] KELBY THWAITS: That's wonderful. Thank you.

[00:45:05.24] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: You're welcome.

[00:45:07.19] INTERVIEWER: That's very good. Is there anything else you'd like to say for the record?

[00:45:10.26] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: For the record? [all laugh]. Let's see--off the cuff. When I look at these things, you know [looking at list]. I really enjoyed the campus ministry part of it, because it was mostly fun and dealing with people who were healthy and--.

[00:45:25.27] INTERVIEWER: And their spiritual growth.

[00:45:27.19] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yes. Oh yes.

[00:45:29.09] INTERVIEWER: And it seems to me that was an exciting time in the church.

[00:45:32.24] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: It was yeah. And then, you know, dealing with people in that age group--a lot of them were preparing for marriage, you know--some of them were young parents

already--so that was fun to deal with. Let's see what else is here. And Sacred Heart Parish--that was a good experience because the pastor was very social-minded, so he was trying something new all the time--and he was good at it. And he was well known in San Jose. And so if you said you were working for Father Mateo you had your way made for you. It was good. University of Arizona--I thought of that while we were talking of Arizona--and the elections now--how they were holding out. That was a good place to work too.

[00:46:40.28] [Director's comments].

[00:47:08.18] INTERVIEWER: You've been many places. And you've really ministered to the whole person, it seems.

[00:47:15.05] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yeah, that's the thing, yeah. Holistic nursing, yeah.

[00:47:19.23] INTERVIEWER: And campus ministry--

[00:47:22.05] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: You can use all those skills.

[00:47:26.25] INTERVIEWER: It's quite a vocation.

[00:47:30.02] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: It is. That's the thing about being a Sister of St. Joseph--we're ready for everything, and so--. And I'd get changed from one place to another and it would be all new to me--but I caught on to it. But I said, the problem was, if you're good at something, then they keep moving you up. Let me stay there for a while, you know!

[00:47:53.04] INTERVIEWER: But you always went with the call, it seems.

[00:47:58.06] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: I hope so.

[00:48:00.07] INTERVIEWER: Responding to the needs.

[00:48:00.21] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yes. And holistic--you know, that whole idea--mind, body, spirit--

[00:48:11.13] INTERVIEWER: Yeah. That seems to--when in your career do you think that came clear to you? Or did you always have a sense for that?

[00:48:21.12] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Well, I probably had a sense of it, but I couldn't name it all--I couldn't define it. But then--in some of the workshops I went to after that and they talked about it. So that when you walk in a room you know, you notice certain things--but in the environment and you can make some changes. So it doesn't all have to do with giving a shot or whatever.

[00:48:48.09] INTERVIEWER: So you know the Mount is--we're putting forward a Wellness Movement. Have you heard about that?

[00:48:53.00] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Yeah. I think that's wonderful.

[00:48:56.17] INTERVIEWER: Focusing on sleep, nutrition, exercise, and stress. And it's called Body, Mind, Spirit, just like you said.

[00:49:07.05] SISTER MARGARET ELLEN MCGRAW: Body, Mind, Spirit, yeah. It is. [Director's comments].

[00:49:32.04] End of interview.

Interview Index

Date: 11/09/2016

Interviewee: Sister Margaret Ellen McGraw

Interviewer: Shannon Green, Director, CSJ Institute, Mount Saint Mary's University; Kelby Thwaits, Instructor, Film and Television, Mount Saint Mary's University; Mary Trunk, Instructor, Film and Television, Mount Saint Mary's University; Laura Townsend, Production Coordinator, CSJ Institute.

Location: Carondelet Center, Los Angeles, California.

Transcription Date: 03/16/2017

Transcribed By: Nancy Steinmann

[00:00:00.00] [Director's comments].

[00:01:05.09] Full name and age: Sister Margaret Ellen "Maggie" McGraw, age 87.

[00:01:29.03] Early life and family. Born Detroit, Michigan. Four brothers, two sisters. Holy Redeemer School, Redemptor's Parish. Cardinal Joseph William Tobin C.Ss.R. Moved to Los Angeles 1953, California. Visiting Mount St. Mary's College. Sister Mary Teresa Connolly.

[00:02:57.21] Moving to California. Early religious life. Irish Catholic upbringing. Immaculate Heart of Mary Sisters (from Monroe, Michigan).

[00:03:49.09] Early vocation. Character of CSJs. Attending Mount in Nursing program. Entering CSJS 1954 end of junior year of college, age 23. Sister Mary Teresa Connolly.

[00:05:05.04] Attraction to CSJs. Down-to-earth. St. Vincent's Hospital with Daughters of Charity. Queen of Angels Hospital with Franciscans.

[00:05:59.13] Family reaction to vocation. Early community life. Sister Mary Rebecca [Doan (1910-1999)], MSMC Nursing faculty. Sister John Bernard [Marion Hurley], MSMC Nursing faculty. Sister Mary Arthur [Meyer?].

[00:07:03.08] Nursing missions. Medical surgical nursing at Daniel Freeman Hospital, Inglewood, California. Pediatric nurse at St. Joseph's Hospital, Lewiston, Idaho. Nez Perce Indians.

[00:07:51.05] Daniel Freeman Hospital, Inglewood, California in 1950s-1960s. Gilbert "Gil" Ray Hodges (1924-1972), manager of Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team.

[00:08:24.29] Hopes for Nursing career. Director of Nursing at Daniel Freeman Hospital.

[00:09:32.02] Career in 1960s. Mission to Tucson, Arizona. CSJs in Tucson.

[00:10:22.20] Working with Nez Perce community.

[00:11:01.24] Vatican II. Change in habit. Issues with habit in hospitals. Community reaction to changes. Relations with nurses and doctors after change of habit. Prayers in English instead of Latin.

[00:13:36.00] Daniel Freeman Hospital after Watts Riots 1965. Living in Howland Mansion [Daniel Freeman Mansion], Inglewood, CA. Changes in Nursing--addition of specialties.

[00:15:01.17] Masters in Nursing at UCLA focusing on Community Mental Health. Training at VA Hospital.

[00:15:47.18] Community renewal and investigation of roots. Trek of the Seven Sisters (1870) re-enaction. Mission San Xavier del Bac on Tohono O'odham San Xavier Indian Reservation, Arizona. Sisters from Tipton, Missouri amalgamation with CSJs. Pioneer spirit of CSJs in Tucson. Sister Annette [??] gaining law degree.

[00:18:18.10] Mission in Tucson. Sister Judy [Lovchik, speechwriter for Sister Clare Dunn] and Sister Clare Dunn [(-1981), Arizona State Representative (D) 1974-1980] killed in accident.

[00:19:51.21] Charism. Visiting Thailand as nurse in refugee camps during Vietnam War [1955-1975]. Sister [Theresa Cavalli??].

[00:22:50.03] Missions in campus ministry at Mount, UCLA and University of Arizona. Students at the Mount. Ministry in Parish Life in San Jose. Social Justice work. Farmworkers movement marches.

[00:25:11.12] Masters in Applied Spirituality at University of San Francisco. Sister [Lucy Malarkey--not CSJ]. Working as spiritual advisers at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. Sulpicians. Clericalism.

[00:29:51.22] Working in leadership as Regional Superior. Working at St. Joseph Center with inmates leaving correctional centers--"The Next Step" program.

[00:31:54.18] Changes at the Mount over time. Dr. James Delahanty [(1905-2013)]. Doheny Campus living at Stimson House.

[00:33:25.12] Future of religious life. Continued learning. Pride in community. Pride in the Mount. Daniel Freeman Hospital. Working with lay people.

[00:35:15.08] Life at Carondelet Center in retirement.

[00:35:51.23] Greatest joy in religious life. President Donald Trump. Unifying love.

[00:37:12.21] Remembering other Sisters. Advice for students at Mount: "Be not afraid".

[00:38:48.08] Other reflections. Working at Holy Cross Cemetery and other cemeteries in grief counseling. Treating Francis James Westbrook Pegler [(1894-1969)], journalist.

[00:41:39.07] Challenges and rewards in nursing ministry. Nursing people with communication issues. Variety of service. Fulfillment in helping people. Example of teen in coma. Family reconciliation.

[00:45:16.15] Working in campus ministry. Sacred Heart parish in San Jose, California--social work. Working at University of Arizona. Holistic nursing--mind, body, spirit. Mount Wellness movement--sleep, nutrition, exercise and stress.

[00:49:32.02] End of interview.